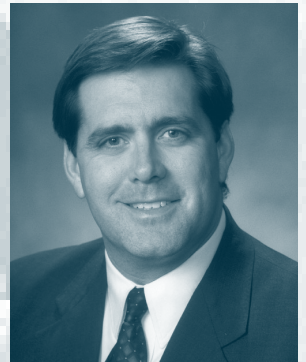


# State Representative **Trent Van Haaften**

Helping Hoosier Families

113th Indiana General Assembly, Spring 2004

## Session Report



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**Property  
Tax Relief**



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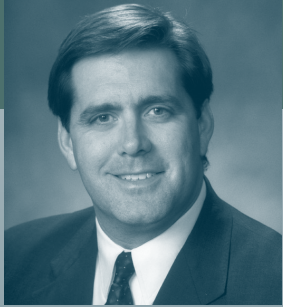
**Protecting  
Children**



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**Job  
Creation**





## 113th General Assembly Ends

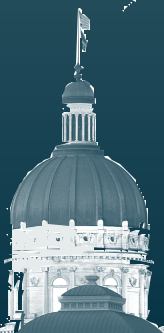
Dear Friends,

The House of Representatives began this past session focused on the issues that confront Hoosiers every day: health care, education, job security and taxes. It was my hope that all of us would stay focused on these issues in order to improve the lives of Hoosiers. This hope was short lived when some members of the House chose to walk away from their duty to serve you. The partisan politics that were shown by walking away from the people's business was a disappointment to me because it meant measures to help my friends and neighbors were lost.

Fortunately, we were able to salvage several pieces of important legislation that will have a positive impact on the lives of my friends and neighbors of District 76.

I hope you find the information of this newsletter to be useful. It is my honor to be your voice at the State House. Please feel free to contact me with your questions and concerns.

Sincerely,



# Property Tax Relief

**W**hen the Indiana General Assembly restructured our state's tax code in 2002, one goal from that effort was to give homeowners relief from the court-ordered reassessment. As the first series of assessments were completed, it became apparent that homeowners were facing an increasingly larger share of the burden passed to them by Indiana's courts.

Because of their concerns, House members led an effort to begin the 2004 session ahead of time. Starting in November, legislators began discussions on additional reforms that resulted in passage of Senate Enrolled Act 1, which contains nearly **\$500 million in property tax cuts for homes, businesses and farms**. It provides additional protections from both the court-ordered reassessment and unchecked local property tax increases.

When lawmakers returned in January, our efforts resumed to give tax relief to the people who needed it the most. We were able to pass another measure (Senate Enrolled Act 296) that increases **property tax deductions for**

**seniors on lower incomes, veterans, the blind and disabled**, as well as those who are rehabilitating homes.

House Enrolled Act 1005 takes additional steps to find other means of financing government services. One study committee

will explore alternatives to the property tax, while another will examine the efficiency of local government operations.

This measure also sets up the groundwork for keeping property taxpayers better informed. A pilot program getting under way in 2005 will provide taxpayers in certain counties with detailed breakdowns on their **tax statements that will show where their tax dollars are being used**. Additionally, people who are financing or refinancing a home will be given information on the types of tax deductions available.

In January our efforts resumed to give tax relief to the people who needed it the most.

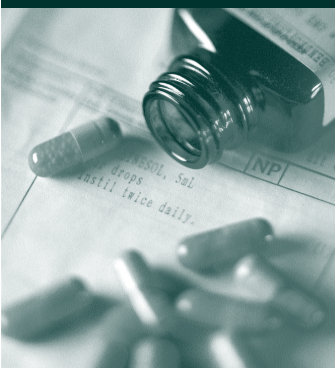
## Bills passed to combat drugs, alcohol

Lawmakers spent a lot of time this session trying to come up with real solutions to the problems brought on by the abuse of drugs and alcohol throughout Indiana. Among the most prominent concerns was the new wave of production and use of methamphetamine sweeping through the state. Criminals favor this drug because of its low cost, simple manufacture and easy accessibility. Another major problem the legislators resolved to face was the occurrence of drunk driving on Hoosier roadways.

House Bill 1136 creates a task force to **combat the production, distribution and use of methamphetamine in Indiana**. The task force will suggest specific actions to lessen the demand and decrease the supply of meth, improve the enforcement of meth laws, and evaluate the success of programs in other states to make recommendations for improving local, state and federal laws regarding meth in Indiana.

**House Bill 1394** charges anyone 21 years of age or older with a Class B felony for causing the death of another person while operating a vehicle under the influence of drugs or alcohol. In addition, anyone who operates a vehicle under the influence, and with at least one passenger under the age of 18, will be charged with a Class D felony. Anyone with two convictions of causing death while intoxicated and operating a vehicle will have their license suspended for life. This legislation honors the memory of State Rep. Roland Stine, and helps to prevent tragic accidents caused by intoxicated drivers.

# Helping Hoosier Families



## Medication Savings

# Hoosiers Gain Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs

Legislators also worked hard to protect Hoosiers from the rising costs of prescription drugs. Under a plan approved this session, more than **400,000 Hoosiers would gain access to affordable prescription drugs**, with many more qualifying in years to come.

House Bill 1265 enables the state to set up an aggregate prescription drug purchasing program to negotiate the prices of prescription drugs from phar-

maceutical companies. **Indiana will also be able to enter into joint purchasing agreements with other states, gaining added bargaining power.**

People who sign up for the program will get a prescription drug card to receive the savings when they fill their prescriptions at their local drugstores. This program will simplify the lives of many and improve the conditions for people on fixed and limited incomes.



## Protecting Children

# Legislators Address Safety Issues

**D**uring the 2004 session, several protection bills were passed guarding children. Legislators passed bills to protect children from abuse and neglect, and keep them safe in automobiles.

•**House Bill 1194** will provide tools to protect children from abuse or neglect. Criminal history checks will be required for each person who resides in a home in which a child is to be placed before the child is placed there. Child Protective Services (CPS) reports may now conclude if abuse or neglect is “indicated,” as well as “substantiated” or “unsubstantiated.” There will be an additional public disclosure in cases where a child dies as a result of abuse or neglect. A statewide group will be created under the bill to investigate the sudden and/or unexpected deaths of children.

•**House Bill 1245** will levy tougher penalties against people who neglect a child who ends up dying as a result of the crime. The bill will increase the penalty for neglect of a dependent to a

Class A Felony if the neglect results in the death of a child. Penalties will be increased for contributing to the delinquency of a minor if a person 21 years or older provides alcohol or a controlled substance to a minor, and the consumption of that alcohol or drug is determined to cause a death of any person.

•**Senate Bill 194** will provide added protections for all children in a home where abuses have taken place.

•**House Bill 1098** will require anyone who operates a motor vehicle with a passenger who is less than 8 years of age to place the child in a restraint system. Passengers between 8 and 16 years old will be required to wear a seat belt. Studies have indicated that child restraint systems can help prevent injuries caused when children do not properly fit in a safety belt.

In addition, the bill will create a Child Restraints System Account that will make grants to private and public organizations to purchase and distribute child restraint systems such as booster seats at minimal or no charge.

# Helping Hoosier Families



**Representative Trent Van Haaften (left) listens to a legislative debate on the floor of the House chamber.**

## Contact

### Representative

## Trent Van Haaften

District 76

Statehouse

200 W. Washington  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

1-800-382-9842

### Online

H76@in.gov  
www.in.gov/H76

## Creating Hoosier Jobs

**P**rotecting and creating Hoosier jobs and businesses were among the issues of most concern in the 2004 General Assembly. Three bills and a resolution were passed that will aid in the retention and creation of jobs as well as encourage business development and corporate responsibility.

House Resolution 47 calls on the president and Congress to address a growing trade imbalance that has resulted in the loss of more than 2 million manufacturing jobs in the U.S. since 2001. It asks that **trade agreements require that corporations pay fair and competitive wages**, respect the rights of workers to unionize, and adopt workplace safety and anti-pollution standards equal to those in our country. The resolution also encourages the federal government to **provide economic incentives to sectors that have seen record job losses** due to NAFTA, and address the adverse effects on trade caused by countries that artificially lower the value of their currency relative to the dollar.

**House Bill 1080 will focus on Indiana companies first as suppliers for goods and services**

House Bill 1080 will help **stimulate Indiana's economy** by providing a price preference to Indiana businesses for public works and procurement contracts. This piece of legislation will focus on Indiana companies first as suppliers for goods and services the state is interested in purchasing.

House Bill 1434 **will benefit low-income businesses by fostering economic development opportunities** by providing grants for training and technical assistance. The microenterprise partnership program created under the bill will provide assistance to businesses with fewer than five employees.

House Bill 1365 will make the state's research and development tax credit permanent, extend the life of the Hoosier Business Investment Tax Credit and create a new fund to encourage investment in new technology. It also calls for a study of **eliminating corporate tax loopholes in current Indiana law** that currently cause tax increases on Hoosier homeowners and businesses.

## Rep. Trent Van Haaften

Indiana House of Representatives  
200 West Washington Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

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